

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1- 17 (Cancelled)

18. (Currently amended) A communication system arranged to communicate under the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP), the system being arranged to not accept a TCP connection request from an initiating party unless a connection has already been negotiated by the receiving party.

19. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 18, wherein the connection is negotiated by receipt at the communication system of a connection request message.

20. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 18, wherein the request message comprises a datagram.

21. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 19, wherein the connection request message includes data on the connection requested.

22. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 19, wherein the connection request message includes information on a source of the connection request message.

23. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 19, wherein the communication system is arranged to evaluate the connection request message prior to accepting a TCP connection.

24. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 23, wherein the evaluation includes authenticating data within the connection request message.

25. ( Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 23, wherein the evaluation includes authenticating the source of the connection request message.
26. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 23, wherein the communication system is arranged to negotiate an encryption key during evaluation.
27. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 18, wherein the or each communication system comprises a computer network communication protocol stack.
28. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 18, wherein the or each communication system comprises a network communications device.
29. (Previously Presented) A communication system according to claim 28, wherein the network communications device comprises one of a router, bridge, gateway, firewall or switch.
30. (Previously Presented) A program storage device readable by a machine and encoding a program of instructions for requiring a computer system to negotiate connection with a source system to be completed prior to acceptance of Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) communication packets from the source system.
31. (Previously Presented) A data communications connection method for the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) comprising the steps of:

prior to the establishment of a TCP/IP connection an initiating party computer system sending a connection request message to a receiving party computer system;

receiving the connection request message at the receiving party computer system;

opening a TCP connection at the receiving party computer system for the initiating party computer system, and,

communicating between the initiating and receiving party computer systems using TCP communication packets.

32. (Previously Presented) A data communications connection method according to claim 31, wherein the connection request message includes data on the connection requested.

33. (Previously Presented) A data communications connection method according to claim 31, wherein the connection request message includes information on the initiating party computer system.

34. (Previously Presented) A data communications connection method according to claim 31, further comprising:  
evaluating the connection request message at the receiving party computer system prior to accepting a TCP connection.

35. (Previously Presented) A data communications connection method according to claim 34, wherein evaluating the connection request message includes authenticating data within the connection request message.

36. (Previously Presented) A data communications connection method according to claim 34, wherein evaluating the connection request message includes authenticating the initiating party computer system.

37. (Previously Presented) A data communications connection method according to claim 34, further comprising negotiating an encryption key during evaluation.